

INTEGRATION OF CRITICAL LITERACY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AS A MEANS OF ENHANCING NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

Disintegration is now internally threatening Indonesia. It is assumed that the problem is caused by cultural misunderstanding. The cultural misunderstanding has resulted in intolerance and radicalism of group ideology. For years Indonesia with its 250 million populations has been peacefully living together with Pancasila ideology in which unity in cultural diversities is highly appreciated and respected. The root of problem lies in the practice of education and obviously the best solution is through education. One of the solutions to the problem is by integrating critical literacy principles in the field of English language learning. Principles of critical multicultural and global literacy can be integrated in English language learning. Theory of systemic functional linguistic (SFL) is in line with and contributes to the principles of critical literacy. This paper combines principles of critical literacy and those of SFL in developing language learning materials. It is expected that by integration of critical literacy principles and those of SFL in the practice of English language education, Indonesia can avoid disruptions of national disintegration and regain national unity in harmony.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Critical literacy is concerned with cultural, social, and political practices that examine the relationship between language and power in texts (Yoon 2016: 33). Critical literacy involves the use of technologies of print and other media of communication to analyze, critique, and transform the norms, rule systems, and practices governing the social fields of institutions and everyday life (Luke 2014: 21).

Text-based language learning covers three areas, namely learning language mechanism (learning about language—**usage**), learning to code meaning in language (learning to mean—**use**) and learning through language (learning the reality) (Halliday 2003: 250; Martin 2010: 3). In learning the reality, the learners learn to interpret the meaning through the mechanism and use of language with reference to the social context of the text. In other words, learners learn the world through the words. The text-based or genre-based language learning is inspired by systemic functional linguistics (SFL) theory.

By combining principles of critical literacy and those of the text-based language learning, social issues are potentially addressed in language learning. This paper addresses efforts to be done in language learning to solve the national disintegration which is now threatening Indonesia. Specifically, this paper addresses and proposes language learning material development to be used in learning activities by which radicalism and intolerance can be calmed down to create mutual understanding between or among hostile groups.

2. CRITICAL GLOBAL AND MULTICULTURAL LITERACIES

The term critical global literacy and critical multicultural literacy is the intersection of critical literacy with global education and multicultural education (Yoon 2016: 174). Historically, global education was developed in response to international issues, while multicultural education was developed in response to national minority struggles in the U.S (Heilman 2009).

The goal of global education is to enable students to learn about their rights and responsibilities and prepare them with skills for democratic participation from the local level to the global (Ibrahim 2005) one. With reference to the goal of global education, Kirkwood (2001) has described globally educated individuals as those possess high-tech skills, broad interdisciplinary knowledge about the contemporary world, and adaptability, flexibility, and world mindedness to participate effectively in the globalized world” (p. 11). This implies that globally educated students have a broader interest in the world beyond their own nation.

There are many different views and approaches to global education. Hanvey’s (1976) five interdisciplinary dimensions have been influential and consistently applied in the field of global education and emphasized in teaching approaches: (1) *perspective consciousness* (2) *state of the planet awareness* (3) *cross-cultural awareness* , (4) *knowledge of global dynamics* , and (5) *awareness of human choices*. Although these dimensions were established several decades ago, they are still considered central components of the contemporary philosophy of human rights (Landorf 2009, p55).

Multicultural education focuses more on national issues (Yoon 2016: 29), specifically learning about cultures within the state (Banks 2004). Originally its purpose from the early 1960s and 1970s was to address racism in schools and societies with early discussions on race and ethnicity focused on African Americans and spearheaded by African American scholars, including James Banks. According to Yoon (2016: 31) the goal of multicultural education is affirming pluralism and promoting equity and social justice for all member of the society.

According to Grant and Sleeter (2009) there are five multicultural education approaches currently prominent in the U.S. education system: (1) *assimilationist* that focuses on minority groups’ adjustment to a dominant norm, (2) *human relations* that center on the improvement of feeling and communication through interpersonal relations, (3) *single group studies* that examine a single cultural group from its own “native” perspective, (4) *multicultural education* that emphasizes cultural pluralism and equal opportunity, and (5) *social reconstructionist* that focuses on social actions and critical consciousness by identifying and questioning injustice. These five frameworks address issues such as race, culture, language, social class, gender, and disability.

Yoon (2016: 46) synthesized critical literacy, global education and multicultural education into one termed as critical literacies. Further, Yoon (2016: 48) elaborates that there are four dimensions of critical literacies, namely (1) developing the student’s global awareness with the interconnected world concept, (2) making connections from personal to global, (3) analyzing and critiquing texts from global and cross-cultural perspectives, and (4) encouraging students to be socially and politically active on global and multicultural issues

Thus, critical literacy dimensions involve global and muticultural issues. Operationally the dimensions of critical literacy cover (1) disrupting common places, (2) considering multiple viewpoints, (3) focusing on the sociopolitical matters, and (4) taking action and promoting social justice.

3. TEXT-BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING

Text-based language learning focuses on learning how to mean by text with reference to the social context. The text based-language learning has been based on theory of SFL. In SFL perspective the use of language or text is determined by its social context. In other words, text is determined by its social context. In its turn social context is determined by text. There is no text without social context and in return there is no social context without text. This is to say that the relation between text and context is a construal one. As aspects of social context, situation, culture and ideology are deterministic factors to text. In other words, any linguistic unit has been loaded with the context of situation, culture and ideology. In other words, the text and the language are never neutral but designed to position the reader in a certain way (Bakhtin 1981, Fairclough 2001; Lewison, Leland, and Harste, 2014). Consequently, there is no absolute truth and this implies that all texts, including print and nonprint materials, need to be critically examined and rewritten.

Language learning involves activities to mean and to understand meaning verbally or non-verbally in various aspects of life and various social context contexts. Halliday (2003: 350) has argued that language learning covers three areas and that implies that English language learning covers (1) learning about English , (2) learning to mean in English, and (3) learning through English.

Firstly, learning about English (usage) refers to learning the rules or mechanism of English language grammar. This has been the traditional focus in learning English, particularly in Indonesia. Students are typically drilled to learn how to form sentences from limited sources of words. Thus, they learn *sentence patterns*, *singular and plural*, *to be*, *agreement* (concord), *pronouns*, *tense*, *degrees of comparison*, *auxiliary*, *active and passive voice*, *direct and reported speech*, *parts of speech*, *particle*, *conjunction*, etc.

Secondly, learning to mean in English (use) means learning to understand and express meaning in English. In Indonesia this has been known as learning communicative functions. Three kinds of syllabus have been introduced to realize operational activities to mean in English, namely situational, notional and functional syllabi. The terms learning English use simply implies learning how to understand others and to be understood by others by using resources of English language. Learners are situationally exposed to lesson topics related to natural activities *in the library, in the post office, in the office, in in the markets, in the bus stations, at the airport*, etc. Alternatively learners are exposed to meaning in English as compiled in the notional syllabus, such as *time, hobby, meal, trip, transportation, description, occupation, trip, argumen*, etc. The functional syllabus is another kind of effort to expose English learners to mean in English. Thus, the students are exposed to how *to introduce /introducing oneself or others, to ask/asking directions, to tell/telling likes and dislikes, to greet/greeting others, to order/ordering things, to book/booking hotels, to ask/asking for helps*, etc.

Thirdly, learning through English (reality) involves learning reality presented in English texts. When learners learn English language they learn texts—not separated chunks or pieces of language—which have been loaded with nuances of meaning related to socio-cultural matters. They do not just learn spelling, words, grammar, function or meaning separately but they learn texts in their social contexts. They do not learn English in a vacuum situation. In other words, they learn the texts that have been loaded or shaped with various domains or fields, cognitions, emotions, values, cultures and ideology. Operationally as learners of English learn **usage** and **use** of English language, they have been simultaneously exposed to **reality**, such as various kinds socio-cultural matters or norms. In this way, the learners get various kinds of knowledge through learning English texts. In addition to learning knowledge or disciplines, they learn how to interpret things through English language. For those English is a foreign language, learning English is learning to compare the students' cultural norms in their first language with those of English native speakers. This means that psychologically the learners are framed or 'imprisoned' by the grammar of English.

The three areas of learning English: usage, use and reality are typically used in the text-based language learning. This is to say that in learning language the learners learn not only the words but also the world as the social context of the text. In this way language learning serves as an effective area for learners to develop their creativity and innovation. Specifically in the context of English as a foreign language, English language learning or education is a means of empowering the students in various aspects, which may mean intrinsically or extrinsically to students of English. The richness of usage, use and reality resulted from learning English are powers and potential for students of English to face and solve social issues such as disintegration which is now threatening Indonesia.

4. A THREAT OF NATIONAL DISINTEGRATION

Indonesia is now facing a threat of national disintegration where group radicalism and intolerance are identified as the cause. Indonesia with 250 million populations of various ethnic groups and 746 local languages has been living peacefully and harmoniously since its independence in 1945. Indonesian people are known as religious citizens where Muslims are dominant among other religious denominations of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and other believers. Geographically the country consists of 17.000 islands stretching in three time zones making society or community and cultures more diverse in the Archipelago of Indonesia. Thus, naturally and socially Indonesia has been destined to various kinds of groups. Despite its natural, social and cultural diversities Indonesians have been living together peacefully and harmoniously because their needs and aspirations have been accommodated and generated by the national ideology of Pancasila. The Pancasila ideology has maintained the idea of unity in diversity.

However, in the last three years Indonesians have witnessed distortion in the implementations of the Pancasila ideology. There have been conflicts of interests among the religious, cultural, social, political and geographical groups. That crisis has led to conflicts among the various groups and the critical situation can be witnessed during the campaigns and election of the Jakarta governor. One of the candidates was blamed and sued due to his blasphemous statements during the political campaign. About 7 millions people gathered and staged a colossal demonstration in Jakarta against the government policy related to the blasphemy. The event is known as the 212 demonstration specifying its occurrence on 2 December 2016. The enormous demonstration in Jakarta was followed by political uprising and demonstrations in other big cities and capitals at the provinces throughout Indonesia. It appears as if Indonesia were about to be torn into pieces.

Obviously the cause of the conflicts is misunderstanding or absence of understanding among the various groups. Groups' radicalisms and intolerance towards others resulted from misunderstanding or absence of understanding are enhancing factors of the conflicts. Above all the root of the matter is a failure in education to implement and understand attitudes towards differences among the various groups. In other words,

education has been the root of the matter and inherently the solution is through educational policies and activities

5. DEVELOPING ENGLISH LANGUAGE MATERIALS BASED ON CRITICAL LITERACIES

The aim of critical literacy education as previously stated are to affirm pluralism and to promote equity and social justice for all member of the society at the national level and to learn about their rights and responsibilities and to prepare them with skills for democratic participation from the local or national level to the global one. The relevant objective in the context of Indonesia at the present moment is to educate learners to appreciate values of multiculturalism and to promote equity and social justice. Operationally, the objective of critical literacy education is to learn to appreciate group differences, treat social groups fairly, and live together peacefully. If good appreciation among the social groups has been set up, misunderstanding or absence of understanding which leads to group suspicion can be eliminated. It is this suspicion that has escalated radicalism and intolerance.

With reference to the objective, dimensions of critical literacy and considering the present social context of Indonesia with radicalism, intolerance and group resentment, the following outlines of learning materials are developed. The materials are designed and developed for the lecture of integrated language skills (listening, speaking, reading or writing). Out of various topics for learning materials four topics are worth selecting; they are Traditional Food, Attires, Home Land and Housing. Due to limitation of space, only the first topic exemplified in this paper.

5.1 The Rationale

The rationale for the selection of the two topics is to represent each ethnic group symbolically. It is the fact that almost all of the ethnic groups in Indonesia have their own traditional foods and attires. Thus, either food or attire represents a certain ethnic group. For example, the Bataks and the Javanese have their own traditional food and very different attires. In terms of ingredients of food, Indonesians have have three kinds of staple food, namely rice, corn and *sagu* powder (*sagu* is a kind of palm tree from which starch powder liquid is tapped). This means that learning and appreciating food and attires of one ethnic group is analogous to learn and appreciate uniqueness of each ethnic group.

5.2 Types of text

The two topics of food and attires can be realized in different kinds of text or genre. In other words, each of the two topics can be realized in the genre of description, explanation, procedure, exposition, discussion, recount, spoof recount, exemplum, narrative, anecdote, report, commentary or news item.

5.3 Linguistic Realizations

Once the kind of text has been set to represent the topic, related linguistic features are used. For example, if the topic is realized by the genre of description the related linguistic features are relational process (BE with its various forms such as *beome, refer, have, obtain, look, sound, cost, play, concern with, deal with, iindicate, mean, denote, ..etc*), epithet and classifiers (such as *old, high, handsome, successful, pretty, dead, alive,..etc*), additional conjunctions and conjunctive (such as *and, but, or, also, in addition, in other words, for example, namely, to be precise, ...etc*). Other related lexicogrammatical features should also be provided covering the aspects of food and attires.

5.4 Learning Activities

In learning text about traditional food, the four dimensions of critical literacies are applied. In other words, learning texts of traditional food is conducted by following dimensions of the critical literacies.

At the first stage the topics of food is selected as the **disrupting common places** dimension. The topic is purposefully selected as it is potential to symbolize group identities. For example, the food *arsik* of the Batak and *lontong* of the Javanese are described. Related to the attire, the *gotong* of the Batak and *blangkon* of the Javanese were also presented in description genres. Ingredient, taste, nutrition facts, packages and other features of the traditional food are given. The same descriptions of the *gotong* and *blangkon* are also presented.

At the second stage where **considering multiple viewpoints** dimensions is adressed the students in groups respond to the following problems after reading or talking about the topic in description genre.

- (1) What are ingredients of the traditional food of *arsik* and *lontong*?
- (2) How do you like the food?
- (3) Why do you like the food in the way you do?
- (4) What aspects are worth noting as being special about the food?
- (5) Why do the Bataks and Javanese prepare the food in they way they do?

At the third stage where **focusing on the sociopolitical matters** dimension is addressed, the students are asked much deeper about social or ideological matters. The questions used to probe the dimensions of sociopolitical matters are as follows.

- (1) Is it fair to discriminate people by their taste of food?
- (2) Which of the two kinds food is hotter from the other?
- (3) What are effects of food to physical appearances?
- (4) Is it fair to discriminate people by their ideology?
- (5) Is it fair to discriminate people by their ancestors?

At the stage where taking action and promoting social justice dimension is addressed, the students in groups are asked to carry out agenda where understanding of socio-cultural values as primary requirements to living together peacefully and harmobiously is inherently fulfilled. The texts they produces are of various kinds of genres.

- (1) Write a pamphlet saying that it is not fair to discriminate people by their tastes of food.
- (2) Write poster saying that it is not fair to discriminate people by their ideologies.
- (3) Write a pamphlete that it is much more natural to have unity in diversity rather than forcing unity.
- (4) Write a petition claiming that radicalism with intolerance will lead to national disintegration.

5.5 Exercises/Assignments

Students of the Unimed are assigned to do the following. For these assignment the students are faced to the problems of food which leads either to national unity.

- (1) Routine assignment
- (2) Critical Book Review
- (3) Critical Journal Reviews
- (4) Mini research
- (5) Idea Engineering
- (6) Project

6. CONCLUSIONS

Critical literacy education aims at teaching learners meanings of texts critically by which the learners become aware of and appreciate different values by others and cope with the others in fair ways. There is no neutral or value free text as inherently a text has been loaded with meaning related to the social context of the text. The principles of critical literacy are potentially combined with those of text-based language learning to address or solve social issues such as national disintegration in Indonesia. This paper has proposed the outline of English language learning materials by which the problem of disintegration and resentment among social groups in Indonesia can be reduced and calmed down in order to maintain the unity of different social groups in the Republic of Indonesia. It is suggested that further studies should be done to investigate the effectiveness of the English language learning materials developed in accordance with the principles of critical literacies.

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